

SOUTHERN PARK COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT - PRESS RELEASE February 11, 2014

The Southern Park County Fire Protection District is the HEART of our Guffey community. It involves our children, our seniors, the auxiliary and every one of us and where we choose to live. It is our goal to make this community the safest place that it can be. As we move into a new era with a new young Chief at the helm, it is very exciting to see the rapid progress and accomplishments made by Aaron Mandel. It is different. It is change. It is good.

Many of the reasons for this recent change in leadership were repeatedly discussed in open meetings from July through December, 2013. I am proud to have had the strength and courage to stand up with my fellow board members to do the right thing, not the popular thing.

Gene Stanley, our experienced former Fire Chief, has resigned from his position on the Board stating, "A SMALL BUT VERY VOCAL, TOTALLY UNINFORMED, VICIOUS AND SHAMEFUL SEGMENT OF OUR CITIZENS HAVE VERBALLY ATTACKED THREE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD PUBLICALLY WITHOUT EVEN KNOWING THE WHOLE STORY."

During our public EMS Services Workshop on January 16th with Paul Mattson (Chief of South Park Ambulance District/SPAD, Fairplay), Candy Shoemaker (EMS Director of South West Teller County EMS/SWTC-EMS, Cripple Creek) and Tim Dienst (CEO of Ute Pass Regional Ambulance District/UPRAD, Woodland Park & Florissant) our mutual aid that had been terminated under our former Chief was restored. With the combined effort of the Board, Aaron Mandel and our neighboring agencies, we are moving forward with medical aid, addressing EMS issues, involving our District in "EMS Day at the Capitol" on January 28th, as well as investigating recent national billing and insurance changes. We are still here because of the dedicated volunteers that keep us fiscally responsible; they provide a service, they don't get paid and they show up. The SPCFPD in Guffey relies on these three ALS Emergency Response agencies (SPAD, UPRAD and SWTC-EMS) to ensure the health and safety of all those in our community who rely on our District for medical response. We are extremely grateful for their support during this difficult time.

Our District will be holding elections in May, 2014. If the citizens of our District can agree upon four members, and only four members, to run for the open board positions in May it will save tens of thousands of dollars because we will be able to cancel our board election and declare the candidates "elected". If more than four candidates run, we will proceed with a legal and fair election. Our attorney's office has been appointed as our Delegated Election Official due to changing deadlines, legal issues, extensive involvement and on-going education that is required with the last year's bill HB 13-1303 and the "clean-up" bill HB 14-1164 that is being considered as we speak. We appreciate the excellent job our previous DEO Mary Ann Melvin and her assistant, Donna Rodriguez, were doing for us; but felt we needed to limit their potential exposure, as well as the District's, by using a law firm this year. We appreciate the feelings of all of those who prefer to vote at a polling place; however, in this instance, with everything that is going on both in the legislature and in our district, we have opted to go to a mail-ballot election to ensure a completely legal election with little or no exposure to the District or our election volunteers.

In closing, since Aaron Mandel took the position of Acting Chief, we have seen incredible progress:

- an exhibit of outstanding volunteer appreciation,
- progress with the Communications (radios/towers) committee,
- wildland annual refresher and pack test,
- increasing new volunteer members,
- the Staffing Committee, proposing staffing solutions that are within our budget,
- equipment maintenance, fire house cleaning and maintenance,
- working with our local Guffey HOA's and LOA's to allow them to start mitigation processes,
- held a CPR class given by Jody Weaver,
- presentation of an Ambulance Proposal, a Plow Estimate and more.

Recently, he regretfully declined a position on the Board for the Colorado Prescribed Fire Council citing time constraints due to his new position (he has a Prescribed Fire Boss III certification). We can now see how our Department is transforming into an efficient system working with all gears greased and moving together to provide the medical and fire response we have requested and wanted for some time.

"Excited" doesn't even begin to express my feelings. I am so very proud of the work and accomplishments Aaron Mandel has made in just these few weeks - in our District, with our neighboring agencies, and even larger at the State and Federal levels. It is pretty impressive. Please don't prejudge the ability of our young fire Chief. Give him a chance!!!

I reassure the community and affirm that this board is committed and works for you, the community members. The safety of the public, our families, and any visitors that drive through is our primary concern. It is an incredible experience we have all gone through and it just keeps getting better! Stay tuned and let's see where we go in this journey together.

Sincerely Submitted by Chairwoman, Amy Mason